



# THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## Root Cause: Preliminary Assessment of the Underlying Cause For Initiating Discrimination Complaints Newsletter



### From the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management

This newsletter focuses on one of the Root Causes, Employer versus Employee Value Systems and the subcategory - Conflicting Work Ethics, the most frequently identified root cause in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activity during Fiscal Year 2002 (FY 02).

All of us are influenced daily by our values. Although we may have common or similar values, our values are unique to each and every one of us, as they are based on our life experiences. We are consciously aware of some of our values, but others may have been learned at such an early age that we do not recognize that the way we behave is because of them. Values are ideals and customs that arouse an emotional response. They guide the way we act and feel about certain things, situations, and people. Tolerance for the value systems of others is an important factor in human relationships. The tolerance increases understanding and facilitates good working relationships.

In working with people, it is important to be aware of our values and the important role they play in our work environment decisions. A value is not itself, either good or bad. Values can and do change. This is illustrated by how society's view of the roles of men and women has changed over time. When we travel, it becomes obvious that other people look at the world differently, interprets what they see and have feelings about situations that are different from ours. Values serve as the cornerstone for our beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and our reaction to the behaviors of others. They may be viewed as individualized sets of rules by which we live, but may conflict with the views of others.

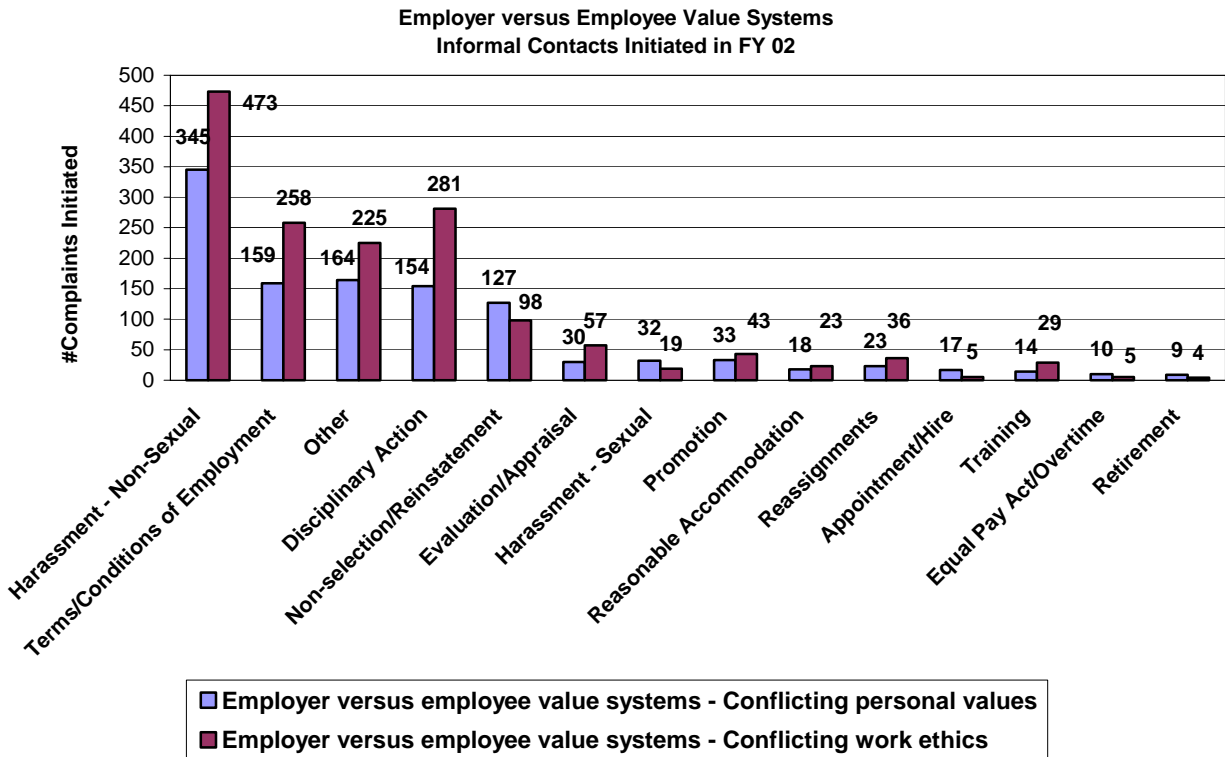
When one individual values "being on time," while the other is not concerned with "being on time," a conflict of work ethics and personal values can arise that may arouse an emotional response, such as frustration. For example.....

### EMPLOYER VS EMPLOYEE VALUE SYSTEMS

#### Conflicting Work Ethics



The chart below shows the impact of the conflicts that were generated when Employer versus Employee Value Systems was identified as the root cause. The chart reflects the distribution of the claims raised during informal counseling for FY 02 that appear to have been caused by the subcategories: Conflicting Work Ethics or Conflicting Personal Values.



Agencies have broad authority to settle EEO disputes at any stage of the complaint process. It appears that one of the primary reasons we may be hindered in our efforts to settle disputes is because we are not aware of each other's values and the impact that awareness can have on proactive conflict resolution.

/s/

James S. Jones